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CONCERNING NATURAL RELIGION¹

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In present theological conditions, one who is called upon to discourse concerning "natural religion as it is commonly called and understood by divines and learned men" finds himself embarrassed at the outset by the difficulty of defining his subject in accordance with the requirement, since the term is variously understood by "divines and learned men." In a recent issue of the *Harvard Theological Review* Professor Knight of Tufts College described three specific uses of the correlative terms "nature" and "supernatural," each of which, moreover, comprises many subordinate varieties. The late Dr. C. C. Everett, to whom, by the way, Professor Knight does not refer, defined the natural as "the universe considered as a composite whole," the world of cause and effect, one might say, in which the laws of Haeckel's "Substance" prevail, or the *natura naturata* of Spinoza, and the supernatural as the non-composite unity, Spinoza's *natura naturans*, which manifests itself in and through the natural. If this use be accepted, and with it Dr. Everett's definition of religion corresponding to the stage in the development of the discussion where the terms first appear, namely, as "feeling towards the supernatural," it is difficult to find any meaning for the term natural religion save as it may denote religion awakened by contemplation of nature. Otherwise, it becomes a contradiction in terms, the adjective cancelling the noun or vice versa. In substantial agreement with these definitions is the habit of regarding the supernatural as covering the realm of free personality, both human and divine, while the world of things, in which law uniformly and inexorably rules, is styled nature. Here too, since religion resides in personality and, at least among those who employ this terminology, involves a relation to personality, natural religion becomes meaningless.

¹The Dudleian Lecture, delivered in Emerson Hall, Harvard University, May 10, 1911.

Again, and perhaps more commonly, natural religion designates a religion in harmony with the nature of man—its doctrines capable of unification with his knowledge, its experiences interpreting and fulfilling all other experiences of his life. Those who accept this terminology usually identify the supernatural with the irrational and the miraculous, and regard any other than natural religion as mere superstition and ignorance which should be hounded off the face of the earth. From this point of view, it is quite immaterial how religious ideas were derived: they may have been imparted by revelation, which in this case is held, as by Toland, to denote merely the way in which the ideas were communicated, or they may have sprung up within man himself. In either case, the point is that they are capable of appropriation into the unity of thought and experience and for this reason belong under the category of natural religion. According to this definition, therefore, all religion worthy of the name is natural, as according to the former it is supernatural.

Without pursuing the analysis farther, let us assume arbitrarily, and for the purposes of the discussion, that natural religion means, what undoubtedly the founder of this lectureship understood it to mean, such knowledge of God, his existence and nature, as may be obtained by man through the exercise of his normal and rational powers directed to the study of the human and the material world. From the middle of the seventeenth to the middle of the nineteenth century, and particularly in the eighteenth, there was quite extraordinary interest in this subject, especially among the English, to whose common sense the facts of organic adaptation made convincing appeal. The literary output was remarkable—we need only mention such outstanding examples as Newton, Ray, Boyle, Derham, Wollaston, Butler, wielding a hiltless sword, Lord Brougham, Hume, Paley, Stewart, and the Bridgewater Treatises, to suggest how voluminous it was. Among divines and learned men of Dudley's time, then, it was commonly believed that the study of nature yielded results which furnished a firm and unassailable basis for revealed religion. Thus the organ of natural religion is reason, while that of revealed religion is faith, by which truths are received which the reason could not of itself have discovered although they may

be capable of appropriation by it. In the words of Culverwell, "As the unity of a Godhead is demonstrable and clear to the eye of reason, so the trinity of persons, that is, three glorious relations in one God, is as certain to an eye of faith. It is as certain to this eye of faith that Christ is truly God as it was visible to an eye both of sense and reason that he is truly man. Faith spies out the resurrection of the body as reason sees the immortality of the soul." With this understanding of the term, therefore, we have to inquire how it stands today with natural religion. Is it possible for us, using its historical materials and methods, to arrive at its conclusions, particularly with respect to the existence of God?

Robert Browning's poem "Caliban on Setebos" has for a subtitle "Natural Theology on the Island," indicating that the author included within the purpose of his poem a criticism of the methods of natural theologians by showing their fallacy when employed by so brutal a creature as Caliban. It is indeed an effective satire, so effective that we must turn for an answer from Browning to Browning, from the author of Caliban to the author of Saul, where precisely the same method of argument is used but with entire approval. Caliban cruelly and wantonly pinches off the legs of passing crabs, David's heart goes out in love and pity towards the stricken king, and each argues from himself to God. But if the method is valid in the case of David, the fault with Caliban's reasoning was not in its method but in its premises. If a base line is poorly selected, the untrustworthy results which follow do not invalidate the mathematical principles employed.

In further reply to Browning's criticism, it might be fairly urged that he has represented only in part the method he impugns, in that he has considered but one of the two principal lines of argument commonly adopted, each of which supplements the other. If the argument from man would lead to caprice or wilfulness, that from nature proves order and stability. In its more cogent forms, that is, the argument for natural religion reasons from the order and adaptations of nature to ordering intelligence and from the moral attributes of man to the benevolence of God. It is undoubtedly true that at various periods in the

history of the argument one of these methods has been emphasized sometimes to the exclusion of the other, nevertheless the foremost advocates of natural religion have perceived that both are necessary for convincing proof.

It is worth observing, moreover, that in its early years the Christian church came very near surrendering both forms on account of certain tendencies of thought which were happily pronounced heretical. If Marcion, for instance, had determined the course of Christian thinking, the argument from nature would have been put out of commission, since he and his followers distinguished between the God of revelation and the God of creation, deeming the latter, who was identified with the God of the Jews and hence of the Old Testament, an inferior being, a demiurge, very like Setebos, and consequently denied the possibility of inference from the world to the true God. The reason for this view, as for Manicheism, is all too evident in the character of the world with its mingled weal and woe, sunshine and tempest, smiling fields and destructive torrents, a haunting sense of which, as we shall hereafter see, has always chilled the ardor of advocates of natural religion and must ever weaken the demonstrative force of the argument. But the church was so tenacious of its claim to antiquity through the Old Testament and its prophecies that it refused to renounce the God of the ancient covenant and Marcion was disowned. Thus the world was saved to God, and the argument from nature occurring often in the Old Testament remained intact. "The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity." Notwithstanding the evil in the world, the various explanations offered for which cannot here be reviewed, it was stoutly maintained that the world was God's world nevertheless, furnishing in its majesty and beauty ample evidence of a divine creator and sustainer.

Again, the attempts to deny the real humanity of Jesus menaced the second form of the argument because proceeding from a view of man which would have been destructive. This habit of thought was akin to the one just mentioned in that both associated the world and the flesh with the devil. Hence it was supposed that

the celestial Christ could not really have taken to himself sinful flesh, and all flesh was deemed sinful, but must have appeared in its likeness alone. Accordingly, it was not the natural but only the spiritual man in whom the divine image could be discerned and from whom one could argue up to God. But the church was nobly determined to maintain the humanity of Christ no less than his divinity, and in so doing committed itself to a corresponding view of humanity. Undoubtedly the Augustinian theology, deeply influenced by Augustine's earlier Manicheism, served practically to discredit an argument which, however, still remained theoretically possible. Thus, notwithstanding difficulties, the church held to a position which kept open the way of natural religion.

Plainly, however, such knowledge of God as could be derived from the works of nature had not availed to lead men to acknowledge and serve him, and in consequence the image of God in man had become hopelessly obscured. Accordingly it was held that God had made a special and additional revelation of himself in order to make more sufficient and efficient the general revelation which had proved inadequate. And thus natural religion came to be deemed rudimentary and needless. What need of the candle of the Lord in the reason of man when his sun is shining in full splendor in the sky of faith? Why turn to the beggarly rudiments of the world when in Christ is God's consummate revelation? Thus it happened, naturally enough, that, although natural religion continued to be theoretically possible, it was practically ignored. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." When gods arrive the half-gods go. So long as revelation stood secure, scant attention was paid to the dimmer, more uncertain, and less effective revelation in nature and humanity. Thus the matter stood through centuries of Christian teaching until the Renaissance and the Reformation.

The rise of Humanism brought, as has often been remarked, a rediscovery both of nature and of man, and was accompanied by a discrediting of the authority of the church as custodian of revelation. The Protestant Reformation was a direct attack upon the historic church, although the reality of revelation was

stoutly defended, but inevitably the shifting of the seat of authority tended to weaken the sense of authority and Christianity itself fell under suspicion and into uncertainty. Naturally, therefore, there came a return to natural religion, and the two arguments from nature and from man came to the front. Very rapidly we must trace the fortunes of these two arguments, beginning with that from nature.

This argument had been revived earlier by Raymond de Sebonde, a Spanish physician, professor of theology and medicine at Toulouse, who in 1436 published his *Theologia Naturalis*, on account of which he has sometimes been called the father of natural religion. The author's preface is highly significant. It affirms that the treatise relies upon no authority, not even that of the Bible, for its aim is to confirm that which is put forth in the sacred Scriptures and to lay the foundations upon which we may be able to build that which is contained in them. Thus, so far as we are concerned, the teaching precedes both Old Testament and New. God has given us two books, that of the universal order of things and that of the Bible. The former was first given from the beginning of the world, for every creature is but a letter traced by the hand of God, so that of a great multitude of creatures, like a great number of letters, this book is composed, in which man finds himself and is, as it were, the capital and principal letter. The second book of the sacred Scriptures was afterwards given to man and this in the failure of the other, in which (so blind was he!) he saw nothing. Hence the first is known to all the world and not the second, for one must be a clerk to be able to read. Besides, the book of nature cannot be falsified, effaced, or falsely interpreted, neither can heretics pervert it, and in it can be no heresy, quite unlike the book of the Bible. Both have proceeded from the same Master. God has given us the creatures as he has given us the Scriptures. Hence they agree well with one another and do not contradict each other.

This suggests a much more modern treatment than the book really contains, for the author goes on to say that no one is able to read in this great book of nature unless he is first purged of his original sin and illuminated by grace—both of which apparently

depend upon the agency of the church. Nevertheless, here in the first half of the fifteenth century is a truly remarkable utterance concerning natural religion which is a fit introduction to the literature that was to follow.

Starting from the physical world as it is in our knowledge, subsequent arguments for natural religion may be roughly grouped under the categories of Cause and Design—from the world as effect to God as creative cause, and from the order and adaptations of the world to Intelligence as controlling and co-ordinating all. In Hume's *Dialogue concerning Natural Religion*, these arguments are subjected to rigorous examination. The dialogue form which Hume adopted was peculiarly suitable to the circumstances in which he wrote, for it enabled him to state objections without committing himself to them, and so successfully was it employed that there is still uncertainty with which person in the debate he identifies himself—Philo or Cleanthes. For our purposes, however, the question is of no importance, since the arguments stand or fall by their own weight and not by his authority. With reference to the argument from order to Intelligence there is an objection advanced by Hume, more thoroughly developed by Romanes, which is staggering. Within the limits of our experience and observation do order and adaptation invariably prove active intelligence? That can hardly be maintained in face of animal instincts, for the beaver constructs its dam and the bee its comb in a way marvellously adapted to the end sought, but can we say that intelligent recognition of that end and direction of activity towards it have achieved the result? Can intelligence be predicated of the beaver and the bee? It may be pleaded indeed that there is a sort of unconscious intelligence resident within the animal or the insect because of its participation in the universal world-intelligence which works through it, but such an answer presupposes the very thing which is to be proved. If, then, our own experience does not entitle us to affirm that order and adaptation invariably proceed from intelligence, with what plausibility can it be argued that similar facts on the cosmic scale point demonstratively to Intelligence as creative and guiding power? The analogy breaks down and the argument collapses, and this even without reference to the theory of evolution which has affected

disastrously the argument as employed by believers in special creation. In fact, the principal effect of the acceptance of the theory of evolution has been to shift the argument from adaptation to order, and accordingly to find in the imposing system of natural laws, including those of evolution, evidence of determining intelligence—an argument which, notwithstanding the severe criticism to which it has been subjected, still holds the field and is the most persuasive form in which the ancient reasoning from the world to God can now be presented.

With regard to the causal argument it is needless to repeat the familiar criticisms. Even if the causal idea be held valid beyond the realm of experience, it would warrant us in arguing only to a cause sufficient to produce the given effects and not to a cause surpassing them. But remembering Hume's own notion of cause, it is impossible to believe that he intended to have either of his imaginary disputants taken as representative of his own opinions. Much has been made of the point that the causal idea obliges us to choose between an uncaused first cause and an infinite regress, but is not the one alternative as inconceivable as the other? Certainly no argument can be pronounced demonstrative which at its conclusion offers us two alternatives both equally inconceivable.

Finally, there is the objection that neither argument, nor both combined, would justify the attributing of benevolence to the creating and directing cause. The formal conclusion of Hume's argument seems to be that we are warranted in affirming intelligence but not goodness from the facts of the world. This has been the outcome of many another investigation before and since. The facts of evil in the world are too numerous and appalling to be blinked. Nor has the doctrine of evolution done so much to help matters as many seem to suppose. Rather, it has deepened the problem by teaching that suffering is not merely incidental but is, so to speak, inherent within the nature of things and essential to the progress of which so much is magnificently and amusingly said. What if a good end has been attained in man,—still the result is but partial and along a single path; the suffering of animals has not abated since man appeared save as he has grown merciful, and the tender mercies of mankind are

often cruel to the animal world; and, what is more, we are by no means prepared to accept uncritically on behalf of God a plea which we often despise in the case of man, that the end justifies the means. Hence, as many urge, of whom McTaggart may be mentioned as a single representative, in view of the facts of evil God cannot be regarded as omnipotent or even as supremely powerful and also good: if we reason from the facts of the world to a creative intelligence, the same facts constrain us to deny his goodness or his power. In the words of our own honorably remembered Professor Cooke, "I do not believe, however, in any sense that nature proves the goodness of God. . . . So prominent indeed is the evil in nature, and so insidiously and mysteriously does it pervade the whole system, that an argument to prove the malignity of God could be made to appear quite as plausible as the arguments which are frequently urged to prove his pure benevolence." It may be indeed that the presence of evil in the world is not incompatible with goodness, provided goodness can be otherwise established, but if natural religion appeals to the world, to the world it must go and abide by its verdict—Not proven.

But it is frequently pleaded that all this proceeds in forgetfulness of the fact that man also is part of nature and that in his advancing worth appears the end towards which nature has all along been striving. That is to say, many present-day champions of natural religion insist that its line must be drawn to include man as the interpretation of nature. This is indeed true but irrelevant to the present issue, for, let us repeat, the development has not been along a single line or even along many lines converging in man. And it is absurd to argue that the goodness in man justifies the evil in the world.

This particular use, however, of the theoretical incorporation of man into nature in an effort to make good the defects of an argument from the purely physical world is comparatively recent, and a word must be said about a much earlier form taken by the second of the principal lines of argument for natural religion—that from the nature of man to God. It is a form which flourished in the period of the Deists in England. The great conflict between Protestantism and Romanism, a conflict waged not in

the world of ideas alone but unhappily also on the battlefields of earth, with men and not ideas alone as combatants bent on one another's destruction, was still fresh in memory, and the wrangling sects of Protestantism were perpetuating the strife. Naturally there was great longing for peace, and how could it be attained better than by emphasizing the points of agreement among warring parties, which indeed were far more numerous and significant than those on which they differed, and if these agreements could be established upon some other authority than that of the Bible, with its almost limitless possibilities of interpretation and misinterpretation, so much the better. Hence we find Lord Herbert of Cherbury announcing five truths of natural religion which, as he believed, were innate in man and consequently were in need of no external support. The five points were: there is one highest divine being; this being is to be worshipped; the most important part of his worship consists in virtue and piety; blasphemy and crime must be atoned for by repentance; punishment and reward follow after this life. These ideas Herbert believed to be implicit in the nature of man in such a way that, whenever an appropriate occasion arose, they mounted into his consciousness with unimpeachable authority. But were not these the essentials of religion upon which not only all Christians but also all men, just because they were men, were agreed, and did they not offer a certain and sufficient basis of unity and ground of peace? The attempt was at least stimulating, and attention was directed to the mind of man in the hope of discovering there as a universal possession, if not these particular points of Lord Herbert, at any rate certain *notitiae communes* constituting natural religion. Into the history of these various attempts we cannot go. They were made both by those who accepted and by those who denied revelation. Mention must be made, however, of a form of the undertaking which is of especial interest to us gathered here to-night in Emerson Hall. The argument seemed to have received its quietus when Locke denied innate ideas, although Lord Herbert himself seems to have put it in a form which would have permitted his followers to reply that they meant not exactly ideas but rather tendencies to action of such a sort that these ideas were their legitimate and

necessary intellectual formulations. But this form also was threatened when Kant affirmed the reality of these tendencies as mental forms but denied them validity outside the world of experience. Yet it was soon asked, Why this denial which virtually throws us into scepticism? If the integration of man with nature be acknowledged, shall we not find the unity of both in one all-embracing life of God whereof each is manifestation? If this be so, then man and nature are of one tissue and structure and the forms of human thinking are also the forms of nature's activity. Then man is the clearer revelation of that which, or of Him who, is the very inmost being of man and nature both. What is latent in nature is patent in man. This was the creative idea of Emerson and of the New England Transcendentalists. Accordingly, by them, the basis of religion was found in the human soul as bearer of God himself within which were found certain intuitions—the idea of God, the sentiment of duty, the assurance of immortality—which as inalienable possessions of humanity were therefore unquestionable disclosures of God. How illogical and silly to seek a revelation from without, while God was thus perpetually and universally revealing himself within! Here was natural religion; and what more was needed, if indeed more had been given?

But intuitions are dubious things, and knowledge of earlier races and of contemporary peoples in early stages of development by no means serves to confirm the optimistic confidence of Parker, for example, that the farther back one goes the clearer and purer become these intuitions. In fact, is it not more likely that these supposed intuitions are actual inculcations for which centuries of Christian thinking and training are responsible? The argument which once seemed irrefragable soon lost cogency.

Meanwhile, however, there had developed a metaphysical form of the argument much more profound and promising. The question was not so much whether our detailed knowledge of the world or of man indicates God as whether our knowledge as such, in form, that is, rather than content, does not necessarily imply God. The world of sense is discontinuous, that of our knowledge is unified: does reality correspond to sense or to

knowledge? If to the latter, then it also is unified and structural, and consciousness furnishes the only form we know for the organization of reality into unity. Is not God, therefore, necessarily implied in our knowledge? The inquiry involved one of the paradoxes which rejoice a metaphysical mind. The content of our knowledge may lead us to doubt or even deny the existence of God but the structure of the denial involves the affirmation of that which is denied. We cannot guarantee the value of our denial save by a tacit affirmation of that which is openly denied. Into this form of the argument it would be superfluous to enter further, for here at Harvard all its phases are perfectly familiar, as well as all the criticisms of it. Suffice it to say that thus theism becomes part of the general epistemological problem. To accept the validity of knowledge in its detailed contents and deny the structure of our knowledge would seem absurd. And if, acknowledging that the trustworthiness of knowledge in concrete detail is not susceptible of logical demonstration, we nevertheless accept it by a sort of ontological good faith, it is hard to see why a similar procedure is not equally warranted with reference to the structural implications of knowledge.

It is remarkable, however, that the course of natural religion, which started among the common ways of men with a simplicity which promised universal comprehension and acceptance, should have led us to these heights of speculation whither only the more reflective philosophers dare climb and in whose rarefied atmosphere only the stout-hearted can dwell. It seems to have fetched a wide compass around to that earlier view of Varro as represented by Augustine which appears to have identified natural religion with an esoteric cult of the philosophers. Surely this is not the sort of natural religion contemplated by the founder of this lectureship, which was to serve as the solid foundation upon which in the succeeding years of a student's life was to be raised the imposing structure of good old-fashioned New England Congregationalism. Can such a natural religion as this ever become universal?

Here, then, it becomes necessary to draw the distinction between theology and religion, and to confess that so far we have been speaking of natural theology and not of natural religion. That

the two ideas have been confused throughout the process we have been hastily sketching is the only excuse for not making the differentiation earlier. But in a book written a generation ago by J. R. Seeley, and properly entitled *Natural Religion*, the distinction was made, and it was shown with almost prophetic insight and power that there already existed a natural religion of a kind hitherto unrecognized which was destined to increase in depth and richness. In truth, Seeley's book, now almost forgotten, seems to me one of the most significant contributions ever made to the literature of the subject, which should have marked a turning-point in thought concerning natural religion quite as noteworthy as that which his *Ecce Homo* made in the popular appreciation of Jesus. For the tendency which he was keen enough to detect has gone on apace, until it has become the most important factor in the religious world of today. The Christian church bewails its diminishing influence, which indeed is a palpable fact, but it has been slow to recognize that outside its borders there has been growing a religious life which it has inspired only indirectly, if at all, and which it by no means nourishes or directs. This extra-confessional and extra-ecclesiastical religious life seeks no alliance with any church, nor would it find itself at home there, but it cherishes a love of truth so pure and ardent that even the most precious traditional beliefs are willingly relinquished in obedience to its august demands, a devotion to goodness which stops at no expenditure of time or treasure or effort that it may give greater happiness and worth to other lives, a love of beauty which demands a city and a country beautiful, and is resolved that even the humblest shall be surrounded by the ennobling influences of art and music and educated into aesthetic appreciation. The point to be insisted upon, then, is the actual presence in the world today of a genuine, although unconventional, religious life wholly independent of ancient forms however tender and sacred as well as of historic tradition however uplifting. It concerns itself not a whit with the arguments we have been rehearsing, finding indeed ominous intimations in the word, as if we had been rehearsing arguments long since dead and buried. It knows not the language of Canaan or even of Jerusalem, still less of Nicaea and Geneva, for its speech smacks

wholesomely of the soil and the twentieth century, nor has it the faintest interest in the endeavor to translate its utterances into the hieratic dialect of formal religion. Yet as the modern man confronts the world of nature and of man, he makes direct and immediate response in natural religion. No worshipper ever felt more deeply the majesty and wonder of his God than the student of science feels, in reasonable awe, the sublime order of the universe. Those who only accept at second hand the conclusions of scientific scholars seldom know in their own experience the sobering and fructifying sense of mystery which often descends upon a reflecting master in the realms of science. He knows full well that the mystery of the world has not been dispelled, rather has it been deepened by enlarging knowledge. True, a man of science may refuse to allow himself to dwell upon the mystery he can but feel, lest it should seduce him from his appointed task, but the mystery is there, he feels it, and sometimes the analytic mind of the scholar yields to the appreciative mind of the man—more often, I fancy, than is generally supposed. The sense of mystery always has accompanied religion, and whoever faces today the world of nature thoughtfully is filled with awe. In addition, religion has inspired a feeling of confidence because of assurance that God was on the side of his worshipper, yet no devotee ever offered his prayer with half the confidence that a modern engineer constructs a bridge. This ordered world can be trusted not to deny itself or betray one who puts intelligent confidence in it. Schleiermacher and Calvin, each in his own way, emphasized the feeling of dependence as essential to religion until there was need to bring to the front again the dignity and worth of the individual man, but neither Calvin nor Schleiermacher nor any of their followers in piety ever felt more strongly the sense of dependence than does the man who today acknowledges the absolute sovereignty of natural laws, and Channing never taught more convincingly the worth of man than does he who, recognizing his dependence, is assured, nevertheless, that to him is given through knowledge of laws ability to control the forces of nature to serve his purposes. Whether or no the universe is animated by a purpose which directs its course towards the highest ends, it is at least amenable

to the ideals of man and may be guided by him towards their realization. No investigator has the least fear that his researches will unlock a force fatal to the highest life of man. On the contrary, he is confident that the unmeasured resources of the universe may all be utilized for human well-being. In this perfect trust and confidence is there not something corresponding to the trust which the old-time worshipper reposed in his God? The order of the universe may not lend itself as of old to the argument of natural theology, but it does far more, it inspires natural religion in the breast of man. Furthermore, the remarkable fact is that the evil of the world, which as we have seen always menaced natural theology, does not seem to impair this natural religion. One who knows nature at first hand is fully and keenly aware of her awful tragedies, nevertheless it is precisely he who often finds in nature a pure delight, rising at times to a sense of companionship which is the very acme of spiritual joy. Natural religion, then, solves in experience the problem which natural theology has so far failed to solve in thought. Thus increasing knowledge of nature has given to the modern man the religious feelings towards nature which the worshipper has cherished towards his God. There are the same feelings of awe, trust, spiritual companionship, only they seem not to be directed towards the same object.

The same fact appears even more markedly in the world of man whence natural theology sought to draw its second great argument. If love of man is of the essence of religion, it surely is not lacking nowadays among those who would not call themselves religious, and who certainly are not religious if judged by conventional ecclesiastical standards. The church honors men like St. Francis of Assisi and the holy martyrs who surrendered all their goods and even life itself in obedience to the command of Christ, but in our own time not once nor twice have we seen young men, and old men too for that matter, turning their backs upon comfort and ease and devoting time, energy, and life to the welfare of their fellows, not in obedience to Christ, but at the bidding of their own sympathetic friendliness. The world may pronounce such men fanatics, fools, and crack-brained enthusiasts, yet in their "fanaticism" is exhibited a spirit which now is

stirring mightily in the souls of men and which is thoroughly religious in character. All about us, thronging the ways of men, are those who never talk about loving their fellows, who in fact would shrink from the pompous phrase, but whose hearts abound in friendliness and good will. They are not blind to the wickedness of men but find in it their supreme incentive to self-sacrificing service. They do not call themselves religious, and if religion is indicated by church attendance and by formal profession, they are not religious, but in reality they are men of natural religion.

Natural Theology has heretofore busied itself chiefly with the world of nature and of man, seeking thence to derive arguments for the existence of God. With the possible exception of the argument based on the general system of laws which interprets the prevailing order of things and the metaphysical argument which endeavors to unfold the implications of knowledge, these attempts must be pronounced logically unsuccessful as they have proved practically insufficient. Meanwhile, however, there has sprung up a natural religion, nourished in good part by the very influences which have been subverting the old-time natural theology, which is genuinely religious in feeling and will-attitude. Not that there may not be higher and purer forms of religion than this which has been described, for there may be deeper appreciation of the object by which these religious feelings are awakened and to which they are responsive. Thus is revealed the function of natural theology, which is so to interpret and correlate this natural religion as to carry it over into the world of thought. Such questions as the following, then, will be raised by natural theology. What must be the real nature of a world towards which, notwithstanding its abundant appearances of irrationality and inhumanity, those who know it most thoroughly have grown to entertain such sentiments of awe approaching reverence, of trustful confidence, and even of sympathetic comradeship, sentiments which have deepened instead of diminishing with more intimate knowledge? What is the meaning of the feeling with which man, as part of this mysterious universe, regards himself and his fellows, of his ideals which far outrun his actual, and his hopes which promise indefinitely more than eye hath seen or ear

heard for the ever-greatening future of humanity? The answer to such inquiries rests with natural theology, an answer for which the metaphysical investigation into the implications of knowledge furnishes precedent and method and indeed offers the most satisfactory suggestion. Let it be added also that Christianity, which has been changing in recent years with almost incredible rapidity, has so far universalized its distinctive concepts that it is in a fair way to become in its new form at once an interpretation and a fulfilment of this natural religion.